

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

RESTARTING AMERICAN
OFFSHORE LEASING NOW ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. GENE GREEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 5, 2011

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1230) to require the Secretary of the Interior to conduct certain offshore oil and gas lease sales, and for other purposes:

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Chair, I rise today in support of H.R. 1230.

Gas prices continue to rise. The instability in the Middle East is threatening our supply, and we already import much of our oil from countries that are hostile to our interests. We need to safely and responsibly produce our domestic resources offshore in order to reduce this reliance on foreign imports and in turn, increase our economic growth.

We cannot forget that just one production rig equals 500 jobs—100 workers on the rig, plus 400 workers supporting drilling operations onshore. This industry comprises not only oil and gas companies, but also a network of suppliers and contractors that purchase goods as diverse as forgings, valves, computers, chemicals and helicopters from suppliers in all 50 states.

That is why I support H.R. 1230, which would force lease sales in the Gulf of Mexico and offshore Virginia that were delayed or cancelled following the Macondo spill.

I encourage my colleagues to support this bill.

INTRODUCING LEGISLATION TO
CHANGE THE STRUCTURE OF
THE METROPOLITAN WASH-
INGTON AIRPORTS AUTHORITY
BOARD**HON. FRANK R. WOLF**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 10, 2011

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, I have been one of the strongest supporters of Washington Dulles International Airport and Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport as well as the Dulles Corridor Metrorail Extension project. I was one of the original sponsors of the 1986 legislation that transferred from the federal government the operations of Dulles and Reagan. I worked with former Senators John Warner and Paul Trible, former Governor Linwood Holton, and former Secretary of Transportation Elizabeth Dole to enact that important law that created the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, MWAA. For nearly 25 years MWAA has operated effectively, governed by board members who were pillars of the community and understood the

importance of the success of both Dulles and Reagan.

After the airports authority was created, both Reagan and Dulles prospered. In the past 25 years, Dulles has become the economic engine for not only northern Virginia, but the entire Commonwealth. Without a successful international airport drawing global traffic and myriad businesses, the region would not be nearly as successful as it is today. Metrorail access to the airport and fast-growing Loudoun County will attract more businesses, create new jobs and ease congestion on area roadways. Dulles Rail being completed on time and at or under original cost estimates is key to many more decades of success.

While I have been extremely pleased observing MWAA's achievements over the past two decades, I believe continued success is now threatened by a board of directors that has lost sight of its primary mission of serving airport passengers and residents of the surrounding communities. For many years MWAA was run by competent and dedicated professionals such as Jim Wilding and Jim Bennett. As current CEO Lynn Hampton prepares to retire, the search process for her replacement conducted by the current board of directors has been a study in poor management and political horse trading. When the board voted to advance the nomination of Nathaniel Ford, the deciding vote was cast by proxy by a then board member who was under house arrest in the Ivory Coast.

This problem arose because under the current law, board members serve until their replacement is confirmed. While this may have worked in the past, in my opinion the law is being abused to keep political favorites in office, even if their service is suspect. The leadership void at MWAA also is reflected in the planning for Phase 2 of Dulles Rail. Under the current board, costs have greatly exceeded original estimates, with more likely to come with the board's April 6 decision to build an underground station at Dulles Airport.

Because of these concerns about the direction of MWAA today, I am introducing legislation to make changes to the 1986 law that established the regional operating authority for Dulles and Reagan National airports. This legislation will amend the original statute to give Virginia a majority on the MWAA Board of Directors by increasing the number of Commonwealth appointees from five to nine. With both airports located in Virginia and with northern Virginia residents and local governments providing the lion's share of the revenue for the Dulles Rail project, it is only fair that the majority of the board be Virginians. The bill will also prevent board members from serving past the end of their appointment, and will establish that board members can be replaced at any time by the respective executives who appoint the board: the governors of Virginia and Maryland, the mayor of the District of Columbia or the president of the United States. I believe these changes are critical if we are to ensure that MWAA will once again function as originally intended and in the best interests of

northern Virginia. Phase 2 will require nothing less than the most qualified board possible to be a success.

It is imperative that these changes to the original law be enacted quickly, and I hope that the committee of jurisdiction will expedite review of the legislation. If the current leadership is allowed to stay in place, it will very likely continue to make decisions that add to the cost of Phase 2 and further jeopardize not only MWAA's bond rating, but the success of both airports under their control. The respective executives simply must have the ability to appoint new board members as soon as possible to prevent the current board from turning Dulles Rail into a failed project.

My primary interest is to see the project completed on time and at or under budget and I believe the board's decision to opt for an underground station at Dulles Airport could be disastrous. Since the announcement, Fairfax and Loudoun counties have indicated that they will not assume the extra costs of the underground station. If the local governments withdraw Phase 2 funding, the project will be in serious jeopardy.

The underground station also is opposed by nearly every elected official representing northern Virginia residents, including the Fairfax and Loudoun boards of supervisors, the Herndon Town Council, Virginia Secretary of Transportation Sean Connaughton and Governor Bob McDonnell. Independent groups such as the Washington Airports Task Force, Dulles Corridor Rail Association, the Northern Virginia Regional Commission, the Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce, the Virginia Chamber of Commerce and AAA Mid-Atlantic have all spoken out against the underground station. For a board member to recently state, "I think the board is committed to the underground station as best for the community at large" shows astonishing hubris and a willful avoidance of reality.

Recent Phase 2 cost estimates are extremely troubling. While original projections put the cost of Phase 2 at \$2.5 billion, the cost spikes to at least \$3.5 billion under the plan approved by the MWAA board. With such dramatic cost increases before a contract is even awarded, some have expressed concerns about the creditworthiness of the bonds that will be issued to pay for Phase 2. Airport authorities nationwide have been placed on notice that bond ratings could be lowered in the future. An additional \$300 million or more for Dulles Rail could be a troublesome sign for the bond markets. I fear an increase in borrowing costs could effectively kill the project in the design phase.

Considering all this information, I do not believe that the current board of directors is acting in the best interests of the northern Virginia residents who will be forced to underwrite costs for Phase 2 through increased tolls on the DTR and increased revenue from county coffers. The underground station will add at least \$300 million to the overall cost of Phase 2. When long-term financing costs are included, the underground station could end up

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